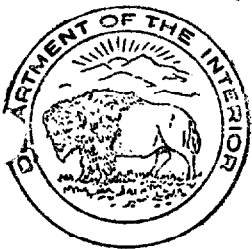


*Office Memorandum*  
9-30-48



## DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

### INFORMATION SERVICE

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

For Release SUNDAY, OCTOBER 3, 1948.

#### WHOOING CRANE NESTING GROUNDS STILL MYSTERY AFTER 16,000 MILE SEARCH

The location of the nesting grounds of North America's rarest and tallest bird is still a mystery.

Flying 16,000 miles over vast territories in northwestern Canada and eastern Alaska, this summer, on a general waterfowl population survey, used as a basis for this year's Federal hunting regulations, biologists Robert P. Allen, of the National Audubon Society, and Robert H. Smith, of the Fish and Wildlife Service, were unable to find the exact nesting grounds of the whooping crane, the Fish and Wildlife Service stated today.

The search for the whooping crane's nesting grounds was incidental to the Service's general waterfowl survey, which covered the Mackenzie Delta region and upland and coastal tundra from Point Barrow, Alaska, to Bathurst Inlet in the Northwest Territories.

Beginning on June 3 at Regina, Saskatchewan, the studies ended on July 27 at the Great Bear Lake, when bad weather damaged the biologists' Grumman "Widgeon," a twin-motored amphibious aircraft.

This was the fourth season of waterfowl surveys of thousands of square miles of Canadian terrain which included a careful search for the nesting grounds of North America's few surviving whooping cranes. None were found on any of the trips. Next June, the National Audubon Society and Fish and Wildlife Service biologists plan to comb the salt-flat plain between Great Bear Lake and Great Slave Lake in Canada's District of Mackenzie, which they consider a "promising region."

The last authentic whooping crane nesting was reported by Professor William Rowan of the University of Alberta's Department of Zoology in 1922, near Edmonton, Alberta.

Once an abundant species which nested in Canada's Prairie Provinces and in the North-Central States, the whooping crane was unable to adapt itself to the conditions of agricultural and community development and is now almost extinct. Thirty-three of the white-plumaged, red-crowned birds were counted early this year on the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge, north of Corpus Christi, Texas. The few thousand

acres of coastal salt flats on the Aransas Refuge are the only known regular whooping crane wintering grounds, according to the Fish and Wildlife Service.

Biologists on the Refuge estimated that no more than 16 of the 33 whooping cranes were breeding adults; the rest -- unpaired, immature young, hatched during the last three summers.

The whooping cranes arrive regularly each year on the 47,000-acre Aransas Refuge in late October. Peak numbers are reached in November and December. The majority of them leave in late March and early April for their mysterious nesting grounds, believed to be near the Arctic Circle. Central Nebraska is known to be a regular stopping-point in the birds' spring and fall migrations. Since the turn of the century, there have been no migration records of whooping cranes appearing outside of the Great Plains area.

An unusually impressive-looking bird, the whooping crane is long-necked, spindly-legged, stands up to five feet in height, and has a wingspread of seven feet. Long feathers on its back curl down over the ends of black-tipped wings. In flight, its neck and legs are completely outstretched. Amplified by its extremely long windpipe, the bird's blaring, horn-like call can be heard as far as three miles.

(NOTICE TO EDITORS: A photograph of the whooping crane can be obtained by writing to the Division of Information, Fish and Wildlife Service, Washington 25, D. C.)

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